

REMARKS

This Response is in reply to the Office Action mailed on December 13, 2005. Claims 19 and 20 are pending and claims 19 and 20 have been amended herein. Claims 1-8 were previously cancelled and claims 9-18 have been withdrawn. No new matter has been added. Entry and consideration of the amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Rejection of claims 19 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 19 and 20 stand rejected as obvious over E.P. 989,533 in view of House, or alternatively, over House in view of E.P. 989,533. It is submitted that amended claim 19, and claim 20 by reason of its dependence from claim 19, is patentable over the cited references and, consequently, the rejection should be withdrawn.

Briefly, the invention is a method for protecting a table top during meals. The method includes first providing a substantially continuous base sheet having a first surface and a second surface. At least one of the surfaces has an adhesive layer applied thereto. A planar object is then selected for arrangement on the adhesive layer of the base sheet. The planar object is positioned on the adhesive layer of the base sheet. At least one transparent cover sheet is laid over the continuous base sheet to thereby sealably secure the planar objects between the base sheet and the transparent cover sheet *in a fluid-tight manner* and to thereby form a place mat. The place mat is then placed on a surface of a table dishes and the like are placed on the place mat.

The fluid-tight seal between the base sheet and the transparent cover sheet is an important aspect of the present invention. The seal prevents fluid from spilled food or drink from ruining the planar objects between the base sheet and the cover sheet.

Furthermore, the fluid-tight seal protects the planar objects from damage when the place mat is washed.

Neither House nor E.P. 989,533 teach or suggest at least one transparent cover sheet laid over the continuous base sheet to thereby sealably secure the planar objects between the base sheet and the transparent cover sheet *in a fluid-tight manner* thereby forming a place mat. Both references teach cover layers that are intended to be removable. The seals between the two layers are not fluid-tight. The references also do not suggest a fluid-tight seal because neither of them were intended to be used with food or any other material that might spill and damage the planar objects contained between the layers.

Accordingly, claims 19 and 20 are patentable over the prior art. It is respectfully submitted that the rejections have been overcome and that the claims should now be in condition for allowance.

Rejection of claim 20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claim 20 stands rejected over House and E.P. 989,533 in view of Brennan. As discussed above, none of the references, including Brennan, teach at least one transparent cover sheet laid over the continuous base sheet to thereby sealably secure the planar objects between the base sheet and the transparent cover sheet *in a fluid-tight manner* thereby forming a place mat. Brennan also does not suggest a fluid-tight seal because the Brennan reference is not intended to protect the planar objects from spills or other fluid.

Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the rejections have been overcome and that the claims should now be in condition for allowance.

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CONCLUSION

In view of the amendments to claim 19 made herein and the arguments presented above, it is submitted that the Examiner's rejections have been overcome and should be withdrawn. The application should now be in condition for allowance.

Should any changes to the claims and/or specification be deemed necessary to place the application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned to discuss the same.

This Response is being timely filed . In the event that any other extensions and/or fees are required for the entry of this Amendment, the Patent and Trademark Office is specifically authorized to charge such fee to Deposit Account No. 23-2820 in the name of WOLF, BLOCK, SCHORR & SOLIS-COHEN LLP. An early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,
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